



News Release

Arizona Department of Public Safety

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State and local officials have been working hard recently to battle the fight against stolen vehicles. The Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force, which is funded by a grant from the Arizona Auto Theft Authority, is made up of detectives from city, county and state law enforcement agencies who work together to identify, apprehend and prosecute individuals and criminal organizations that profit from the crimes related to motor vehicle thefts. The task force is managed by the Arizona Department of Public Safety. In addition to the enforcement mission, the task force also hosts vin-etching programs and provides information on how to deter vehicle theft.

In the fall of 2005 the task force received funding for enforcement details directly related to the specific needs related to the State's border with Mexico. The criminal organizations that profit from the theft of vehicles do so in a variety of ways; to include vin-switching the vehicles and reselling them, dismantling the vehicles and selling the parts, and the use of the vehicles in the smuggling of drugs and humans across the border.

The task force's Yuma squad, Border Unit West, consists of a sergeant and five detectives; which include two from Arizona DPS and one from the Yuma County Sheriff's Office, and two of the detectives are Border Liaison Officers for Arizona Department of Public Safety. These officers work to establish and maintain open lines of communication with their counter parts in Mexico.

Although the task force worked hard throughout last year, January proved to be a very busy month and a productive start to 2006. On January 18th the Border Unit West squad responded to the request of the San Luis Sonora, Police Department, to inspect approximately 150 vehicles, which were impounded by their department. As a result of the inspections, eighteen vehicles were identified as stolen from victims in the United States. Detectives then worked with the various agencies that initiated the reports in an attempt to have the vehicles recovered by the victims.

The Border Unit West squad coordinated an outbound detail on 01-20-2006 in the Yuma area and at the San Luis POE. This was a multi-agency operation with assistance provided by District Four Highway Patrol, US Border Patrol, Customs Border Protection, Immigration Customs Enforcement, San Luis PD, and the Yuma Police Department. The detail resulted in the recovery of three occupied stolen vehicles and two unoccupied vehicles. Officers and detectives made five felony arrests, five misdemeanor arrests, and conducted over 32 traffic stops during the eight-hour period.

On January 25th, the task force assisted the Yuma County Sheriff's Office with a suspected 'chop shop'. Deputies had pursued a subject into a fenced lot located in the 2400 block of 14th Street, and after arresting the subject they discovered evidence that stolen vehicles were being stored there. Task force detectives inspected over thirty vehicles and parts of vehicles. Seven vehicles were recovered with additional charges pending on three other vehicles.

The Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force will also be working with the Yuma Police Department on an upcoming detail in an effort to locate and recover stolen vehicles and identify and apprehend the individuals in possession of those vehicles.

Vehicle Theft Task Force Services*

	FY 2004	FY 2005	% Change
Stolen Vehicles Recovered	2,986	2,792	-6.5%
Altered Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs)	297	349	17.5%
Estimated Value	\$31,577,405	\$30,614,942	-3.0%
Chop Shops ** Investigated/Closed	36	50	38.9%
Felony Arrests	307	287	-6.5%
Insurance Fraud Investigations	41	41	0.0%
Requests for Services	1130	1209	7.0%
Community Education Programs	3	16	433.3%
Law Enforcement Officers Trained	1,018	464	-54.4%
Agencies Participating in VTI Task Force	18	16	-11.1%

* Statistics represent work of DPS and officers from 18 other agencies participating in the Vehicle Theft task force.

** Chop shop: a place where stolen vehicles are stripped of salable parts.

Source: Criminal Investigations Division

